



State of Illinois
Department of Natural Resources

ILLINOIS *boat* REGISTRATION & SAFETY ACT DIGEST



This brochure is only a guide to the highlights of the Illinois Boat Registration and Safety Act. The entire Act may be found in the Illinois Compiled Statutes, Chapter 625. More complete information is available from Department of Natural Resources Regional Offices or from Law Enforcement Division personnel. The information in this brochure is based on laws in effect as of May 2010 and is subject to change.

TO REGISTER AND TITLE YOUR BOAT

To register your boat, you must submit a boat application, required documents and the appropriate fee. Applications are available from Department of Natural Resources offices, boat dealers or on-line at <http://dnr.state.il.us>. If you have any questions regarding registration and titling, call: 217-557-0180 or 1-800-382-1696.

Credit card holders can renew their boat registration by calling:

1-866-867-3542 (1-866-TO-RELICENSE)

Have your credit card, current registration certificate and a pen and paper ready before making the call or going on-line.

These convenient services allow you to renew your boat registration 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

PREPARE

Boat safety education is a positive move toward a safe and enjoyable boating future. Enroll in a Boat Safety Course now.

For information on class locations call:

1-800-832-2599

Definitions

“**Vessel**” or “**Watercraft**” means every description of watercraft, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water, except a seaplane on the water, innertube, air mattress or similar device, and boats used for concession rides in artificial bodies of water designed and used exclusively for such concessions.

“**Motorboat**” means any vessel propelled by machinery, whether or not such machinery is the principal source of propulsion.

“**Personal Watercraft**” means a vessel that uses an inboard motor powering a water jet pump as its primary source of motor power and that is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel, rather than the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel, and includes vessels that are similar in appearance and operation but are powered by an outboard or propeller driven motor.

“**Specialty Prop-craft**” means a vessel that is similar in appearance and operation to a personal watercraft but that is powered by an outboard or propeller driven motor.

“**Sailboat**” means any watercraft propelled by sail or canvas, including sailboats.

“**Operate**” means to navigate or otherwise use a motorboat or vessel.

“**Competent**” means capable of assisting a skier in case of injury or accident.

“**Underway**” applies to a vessel or watercraft at all times except when it is moored at a dock or anchorage area.

“**Use**” applies to all vessels on the waters of this State, whether moored or underway.

“**Waters of this State**” means any water within the jurisdiction of this State.

Application and Jurisdiction: The Department shall, for the purposes of this Act, have full and complete jurisdiction of all waters within the boundaries of the State of Illinois.

Inspection, Enforcement & Prosecutions

Inspection: Agents of the Department of Natural Resources or other duly authorized police officers may board and inspect any watercraft at any time for the purpose of determining compliance with this Act.

Resistance to Officers:

- It is unlawful for any person to resist or obstruct any officer or employee of the Department in the discharge of his duties under the provisions hereof.
- It is unlawful for the operator of a watercraft, having been given a signal by a conservation police officer, sheriff, deputy sheriff, or other police officer directing the operator of the watercraft to a stop, to willfully fail or refuse to obey the direction, to increase speed, to extinguish lights, or otherwise flee or attempt to elude the officer. The signal given by the officer may be by hand, voice, sign, siren, or blue or red light.

Registration And Titling

Boats which must be registered and titled: All watercraft operated on the waters within the jurisdiction of this state shall be registered and titled.

Boats exempted from registration and titling: Watercraft shall not be required to be registered and titled under this Act if it is:

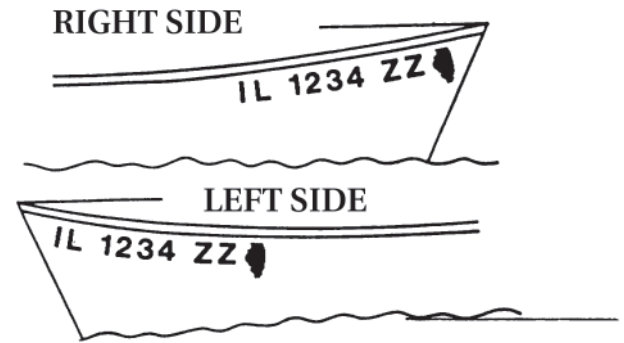
1. A watercraft which has a valid marine document issued by the United States Coast Guard, **EXCEPT THAT** any such documented vessel used upon the waters of this State for more than 60 days in any calendar year shall be registered in compliance with this Act.
2. Already covered by a number in full force and effect from another state, if such boat will not be within this State for a period in excess of 60 consecutive days.
3. A sailboat.
4. A watercraft from a country other than the United States temporarily using the waters of the State.
5. A watercraft owned by the United States, a state or subdivision thereof, used solely for official purposes, and clearly identifiable.
6. A vessel used **exclusively** as a ship's lifeboat.
7. Watercraft while competing in any race **approved by the Department**, or if the watercraft is designed and intended solely for racing while engaged in navigation that is incidental to preparation of the watercraft for the race. Preparation of the watercraft for the race may be accomplished **only after obtaining the written authorization of the Department.**
8. Non-powered watercraft owned and operated on water completely impounded on land belonging to the owner of the watercraft. This does not apply to waters controlled by a club or association.
9. A canoe or kayak which is owned by an organization which is organized and conducted on a not-for-profit basis with no personal profit inuring to anyone as a result of the operation.

Registration – Title Application: The owner of each watercraft requiring registration and titling by this State shall file a watercraft application with the Department. The application shall be signed by the owner of the boat, and shall be accompanied by the required documents (New boats: you must surrender the original properly endorsed Manufacturer's Certificate of Origin; Boats previously registered or titled in another state; you must surrender the owner's registration certificate an/or title; Illinois titled boats: you must surrender the owner's Illinois title) and appropriate fee.

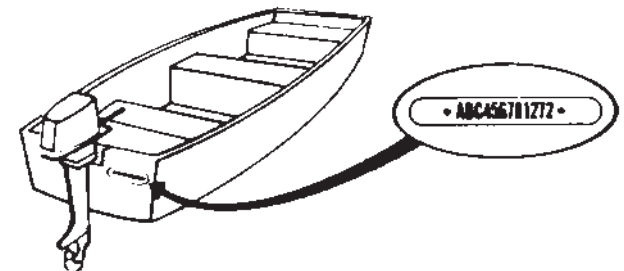
Warning: Boats purchased new or used from out of state dealers, manufacturers or lending institutions are subject to tax. You must contact the Illinois Department of Revenue at 1-800-732-8866 for instructions before submitting an application.

Registration Number Display: The owner shall paint on or attach to both sides of the bow (front) of the boat the registration number, which shall be of block characters at least 3 inches in height. The figures shall read from left to right, be of contrasting color to their background and be maintained in a legible condition. No other numbers shall be displayed on the bow. A space shall be provided between the IL and the number and another space between the number and the letters which follow. A vessel that is covered by a valid marine document must display current expiration decals, but is exempt from the requirement to display an Illinois registration number. Non-powered canoes and kayaks are not required to display registration numbers. Display decals only.

Note: For Federally documented vessels, the Illinois registration decals are to be displayed on either side of the Federally documented name of the vessel.



Hull Identification Number (HIN): Boats manufactured after 1972 will have a hull identification number consisting of 12 characters normally found on the outboard side of the transom, or if there is no transom, to the outermost starboard side at the end of the hull that bears the rudder or other steering mechanism, above the water line. The HIN may be carved, burned, stamped, embossed, or otherwise permanently affixed in such a way that alteration, removal or replacement would be obvious or evident.



No person may possess a watercraft that has the HIN removed, defaced or obliterated.

Boat Equipment

The Illinois Boat Registration and Safety Act provides that the following equipment will be provided in various classes of boats:

- A. **Personal Flotation Devices (life preservers):** It is unlawful to operate any watercraft unless at least one U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD of the following types or their equivalent is on board for each person: Type I, Type II or Type III (wearable PFDs). The PFD requirement does not apply to sailboards.

Any watercraft 16 feet or more in length, except a canoe or kayak, must have at least one Type IV (throwable) U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD or its equivalent on board, in addition to the PFDs required above. When assisting a person on water skis, aquaplane, or similar device, there must be one U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD on board the watercraft for each person being assisted or towed, or worn by the person being assisted or towed. NOTE: A ski belt is not a U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD.

Type I, and II personal flotation devices are designed to turn an unconscious person in the water from a face downward position to a vertical or slightly backward position.

A Type III personal flotation device is designed to keep a conscious person in a vertical or slightly backward position. A Type III is not required to turn an unconscious person to a face up position in the water but will maintain a stable face up attitude once a person assumes that position.

A Type IV personal flotation device is designed to be thrown to a person in the water and not worn.

A Type V personal flotation device is approved for restricted use and may be used in lieu of the Type I, II or III only when used in the activity for which it is approved.

The type and USCG approval information will be found on the device label.

All such PFDs mentioned in this section must be readily accessible in serviceable condition, of an appropriate size for whom it is intended, and legibly marked with the U.S. Coast Guard approval number.

No person may operate a personal watercraft or specialty prop-craft unless each person aboard is wearing a Type I, Type II, Type III or Type V PFD approved by the United States Coast Guard.

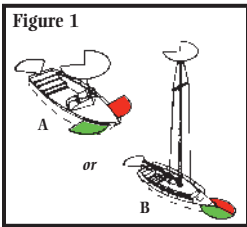
No person may operate a watercraft under 26 feet in length unless a Type I, Type II, Type III, or Type V personal flotation device is being properly worn by each person under the age of 13 on board the watercraft at all times in which the watercraft is underway; however, this requirement shall not apply to persons who are below decks in totally enclosed cabin spaces. This provision shall not apply to a person operating a watercraft on private property.

- B. **Lanyards or Engine Cut-off Devices:** No person may operate any motor boat, including a personal watercraft or specialty prop-craft, equipped with an engine cut-off switch while the engine is running and the motorboat is underway, without verifying that the engine cut-off switch is operational and fully-functional and: (1) the engine cut-off switch link is properly attached to his or her person, clothing or worn PFD, as appropriate for the specific vessel; or (2) activating the wireless cut-off system. For the purposes of this section, "Engine cut-off switch link" means the lanyard or wireless cut-off device used to attach the motorboat operator to

the engine cut-off switch installed on the motorboat. "Engine cut-off switch" means an operational emergency cut-off engine stop switch installed on a motorboat that attaches to a motorboat operator by an engine cut-off switch link.

- C. **Lights:** Every vessel shall carry and display when underway between the hours of sunset and sunrise such lights as shall be required by the United States Coast Guard for watercraft of equivalent length and type. The U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Rules, International-Inland encompasses lighting requirements for every description of watercraft. The information provided here is intended for power-driven and sailing vessels less than 20 meters.

Power-Driven Vessels

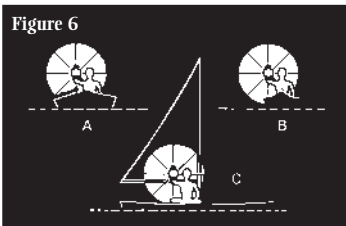
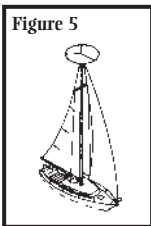
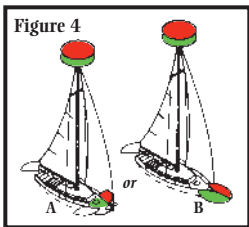
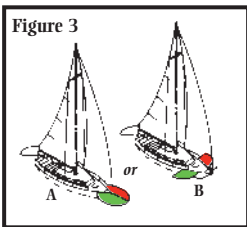


Power-driven vessels of less than 20 meters, shall exhibit navigation lights as shown in Figure 1.

Vessels of less than 12 meters in length, may show the lights in either Figure 1 or Figure 2.

Sailing vessels operating under machinery, or under sail and machinery are considered power-driven and must display the lights prescribed for a power-driven vessel.

Sailing Vessels & Vessels Under Oars



Sailing vessels less than 20 meters exhibit navigation lights shown in Figure 3 or 4 or may be combined in a single lantern carried at the top of the mast as shown in Figure 5.

Sailing vessels less than 7 meters may carry an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light to be displayed in sufficient time to prevent collision (see Figure 6), if practicable, the lights prescribed for sailing vessels less than 20 meters should be displayed.

Vessels under oars may display the lights prescribed for sailing vessels, but if not, must have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light to be shown in sufficient time to prevent collision (see Figure 6).

Lights For Anchored Vessels

Power-driven vessels and sailing vessels at anchor must display anchor lights. An anchor light for a vessel less than 20 meters in length is an all-round white light visible for 2 miles exhibited where it can best be seen.

Vessels less than 7 meters are not required to display anchor lights unless anchored in or near a narrow channel, fairway or anchorage or where other vessels normally navigate.

- D. **Mufflers:** All motorboats shall be equipped and maintained with an effective muffler or underwater exhaust system. An effective muffler or underwater exhaust system is one which does not produce sound levels that create excessive or unusual noise, or sound levels that are in excess of 90 decibels when subjected to a stationary sound level test or 75 decibels when in operation on the waters of this State.
- A motorboat tuned up for or participating in official trials for a sanctioned race or regatta conducted under a permit, or a motorboat being operated by a boat or marine engine manufacturer for the purpose of testing or development are exempt from this requirement.
- Any person who operates any motorboat upon the waters of this State shall be deemed to have given consent to the test or tests prescribed by the Department to determine if the motorboat is in compliance.
- E. **Whistles:** It is unlawful to operate a motorboat without a mouth, hand, or power operated whistle, horn, or other appliance capable of producing a blast of 2 seconds or more duration and audible for at least one-half mile. This regulation applies to all motorboats, regardless of size or motor.
- F. **Fire Extinguisher:** It is unlawful to operate any motorboat equipped with an internal combustion engine anywhere in this State without at least one U.S. Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher so placed as to be readily accessible and in such condition as to be ready for immediate and effective use.
- G. **Carburetor Arrestors:** Except for outboard motors, all motorboats shall be fitted with a Coast Guard approved device for arresting back fire.
- H. **Ventilators:** Except for open boats, all motorboats using fuel having a flashpoint of 110 degrees fahrenheit or less shall have at least 2 ventilator ducts, fitted with cowls or their equivalent, for the efficient removal of explosive or flammable gases from the bilges of every engine and fuel tank compartment. There shall be at least one exhaust duct installed so as to extend from the open atmosphere to the lower portion of the bilge and at least one intake duct installed so as to extend to a point at least midway to the bilge or at least below the level of the carburetor air intake. The cowls shall be located and trimmed for

maximum effectiveness and in such manner so as to prevent displaced fumes from being recirculated.

- I. **Siren and Flashing Lights:** The use of sirens or flashing lights shall be unlawful except on duly designated patrol boats, and such sirens or flashing lights used in violation of the Boating Act shall be considered a public nuisance and subject to confiscation and disposal as determined by a competent court of jurisdiction.
- J. **Capacity Plates:** Every vessel less than 26 feet in length, designed to carry two or more persons and to be propelled by machinery as its principal source of power or designed to be propelled by oars shall, if manufactured or offered for sale in this state, have affixed permanently thereto by the manufacturer, a capacity plate as required by this Section. As used in this Section, "manufacturer" means to construct or assemble a vessel or alter a vessel in such manner as to change its weight capacity.
- K. **Battery Covers:** Storage batteries shall be provided with suitable supports and secured against shifting. Batteries shall be equipped with non-conductive shielding means to prevent accidental shorting.
- L. **Sealing of Marine Heads:** No marine head (toilet) on any watercraft used upon waters of this state may be so constructed and operated as to permit the discharge of any sewage into the waters directly or indirectly.
- M. **Visual Distress Signals:** It is unlawful to operate any watercraft on the waters of Lake Michigan without having onboard visual distress signals as required and approved by the U.S. Coast Guard, so placed as to be readily accessible and in such condition as to be ready for immediate and effective use. (Note: The U.S. Coast Guard requires visual distress signals on all vessels whose length is 16 feet or greater being operated during the day.)

Operation of Boats

- A. **Careless Operation:** No person shall operate any watercraft in a careless or heedless manner as to endanger any person or property, or at a rate of speed greater than will permit him in the exercise of reasonable care to bring the watercraft to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead.
- B. **Reckless Operation:** No person shall operate any watercraft, specialty prop-craft, personal watercraft or manipulate any waterskis, aquaplane, or similar device in such a manner as to willfully or wantonly endanger the life, limb or property of any person, to weave through congested traffic, to jump the wake of another vessel unreasonably or unnecessarily close to the other vessel or when visibility around the other vessel is obstructed, to wait until the last possible moment to swerve to avoid collision, or operate any watercraft so as to approach or pass another watercraft in such a manner or at such a rate of speed as to create a hazardous wake or wash.

A person convicted of committing a violation of this section shall be guilty of aggravated reckless operation of a watercraft if the violation of this Section resulted in great bodily harm or permanent disability or disfigurement of another, when the violation was a proximate cause of the injuries.

- C. **Passing:** When two boats are approaching each other "head on" or nearly so (so as to involve risk of collision), each boat must bear to the right and pass the other boat on its left side.
- D. **Crossing:** When boats approach each other at right angles, the boat approaching on the right side has the right of way.
- E. **Overtaking:** One boat may overtake another on either side but must grant right of way to the overtaken boat.
- F. **Sailboats and Rowboats:** When a motorboat is approaching a boat propelled solely by sails or oars, the motorboat must yield the right of way to the sailboat or rowboat except, when a large craft is navigating in a confined channel, the large craft has the right of way over a boat propelled solely by oars or sails.
- G. **Restricted Areas:** No person shall operate a motorboat in a water area which has been clearly marked by buoys or signs as a bathing, fishing or otherwise restricted area, except in the manner prescribed by the buoys or signs marking the area. In areas designated as "No Wake" areas, no motorboat underway shall exceed 5 miles per hour while in the posted "No Wake" area.
- H. **Slow – No Wake Areas:** No person shall operate a watercraft within 150 feet of a public launching ramp owned, operated or maintained by the Department or a political subdivision of the State at greater than a "No Wake" speed. Posting of the areas is not required.
- I. **Water Skiing:** When towing a person on water skis, aquaplane or similar device, the towing vessel must have a capacity of at least three persons and must be occupied by at least two competent people. it is unlawful to water ski from the period of one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour prior to sunrise.
- J. **Diving:** No watercraft shall be operated within 150 feet of a diving flag, except for watercraft directly associated with the diving activity.
- K. **Operating Under the Influence (OUI):** No person shall operate a watercraft while under the influence of alcohol or any other drug to the degree which renders him/her incapable of safely operating such watercraft, or who has any amount of a drug, substance, or compound in his/her blood or urine resulting from the unlawful use or consumption of cannabis as defined in the Cannabis Control Act or a controlled substance listed in the Illinois Controlled Substance Act.
- L. **Unlawful Operation at Night:** No person shall operate a personal watercraft or a specialty prop craft between the hours of sunset and sunrise.
- M. **Passenger Location:** No person operating a motorboat shall allow a person in the motorboat to ride or sit on the gunwales, tops of seat backs, or on the decking over the bow or stern of the motorboat while the motorboat is underway, unless the person is inboard of guards or rails provided on the motorboat to prevent passengers from being lost overboard.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit entry upon the decking over the bow or stern of the motorboat for the purpose of anchoring, mooring, or casting off or some other necessary purpose nor to prohibit customary practices while lawfully engaged in commercial fishing under the provisions of the Fish and Aquatic Life Code or hunting and trapping under the provisions of the Wildlife Code.

These provisions shall not apply to the driver of the boat, a person while fishing or to a person on private property.

- N. **Age of Operator:**
- No person under 10 years of age may operate a motor boat.
 - Persons at least 10 years of age and less than 12 years of age may operate a motorboat only if:
 - they are accompanied on the motorboat and under the direct control of a parent or guardian, or a person at least 18 years of age designated by a parent or guardian.
 - Persons at least 12 years of age and less than 18 years of age may operate a motorboat only if:
 - they are accompanied on the motorboat and under the direct control of a parent or guardian or
 - a person at least 18 years of age designated by a parent or guardian or
 - such motorboat operator is in possession of a Boating Safety Certificate issued by the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Education or a valid certificate issued by another state, a province of the Dominion of Canada, the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary or the United States Power Squadron.
 - Violations of this Section done with the knowledge of a parent or guardian shall be deemed a violation by the parent or guardian and punishable under Chp. 625 Art. 11A of the Illinois Boat Registration and Safety Act.
- O. **Operation of watercraft upon the approach of an authorized emergency watercraft.**

Upon the immediate approach of an authorized emergency watercraft making use of rotating or flashing visual signals and lawfully making use of a visual signal, the operator of every other watercraft shall yield the right of way and shall immediately reduce the speed of the watercraft, so as not to create a wake, and shall yield way to the emergency watercraft, moving to the right to permit the safe passage of the emergency watercraft, and shall stop and remain in that position until the authorized emergency watercraft has passed, unless otherwise directed by a police officer.

Upon approaching a stationary authorized emergency watercraft, when the authorized emergency watercraft is giving a signal by displaying rotating or alternately flashing red, red and white, red and blue, or red in combination with white or blue lights, a person operating an approaching watercraft shall proceed with due caution at no wake speed and yield the right of way by moving safely away from that authorized emergency watercraft, proceeding with due caution at a no wake speed with due regard to safety and water conditions, maintaining no wake speed until sufficiently away from the emergency watercraft so as not to create a wake that would otherwise rock or otherwise disturb the authorized emergency watercraft.

...a person who violates this Section commits a business offense punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 or more than \$10,000. It is a factor in aggravation if the person committed the offense while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

If a violation of this Section results in damage to the property of another person, in addition to any other penalty imposed, the person's watercraft operating privileges shall be suspended for a fixed period of not less than 90 days and not more than one year.

If a violation of this Section results in injury to another person, in addition to any other penalty imposed, the person's watercraft operating privileges shall be suspended for a fixed period of not less than 180 days and not more than 2 years.

Article 6. Boat Accident Reports

The operator of a vessel involved in a collision or accident must render aid (if practical) to any affected persons and provide his name, address and vessel information to any person injured and to the owner of any property damaged as a result of the collision or accident. Failure to comply when the accident or collision resulted in the death or personal injury to a person is a Class A misdemeanor.

Any person who has failed to stop or comply with this section must as soon as possible but no later than one hour after the collision or accident occurred, report the incident to the nearest police station or sheriff's office. If the operator was hospitalized, this report must be filed within one hour of being discharged from the hospital. If the collision or accident involved personal injury to a person, failure to comply is a Class 4 felony. Personal injury is defined as any injury requiring treatment beyond first aid. If the collision or accident resulted in death, failure to comply is a Class 2 felony punishable by 3 – 4 years in prison.

In addition to the above requirements, whenever a boat is involved in a collision or accident causing property damage of \$2000 or more, or results in total loss of the vessel, or causes injury to any person requiring medical attention beyond first aid, a report, completed by the operator, must be made to the Department, on forms provided, within 5 days.

All boating accidents which result in loss of life, must be reported, by the operator, to the Department on forms provided, within 48 hours.

How Do I Report

A Boating Violation or Boat Accident?

Illinois Conservation Police Officers (CPO's) are dispatched by your local Illinois State Police District HQ dispatch center. If you have a serious boating violation or boat accident to report, dial "911" immediately. Otherwise, contact your local Illinois State Police District Dispatch Center HQ dispatch center for assistance in contacting a Conservation Police Officer.

Suspension Provisions

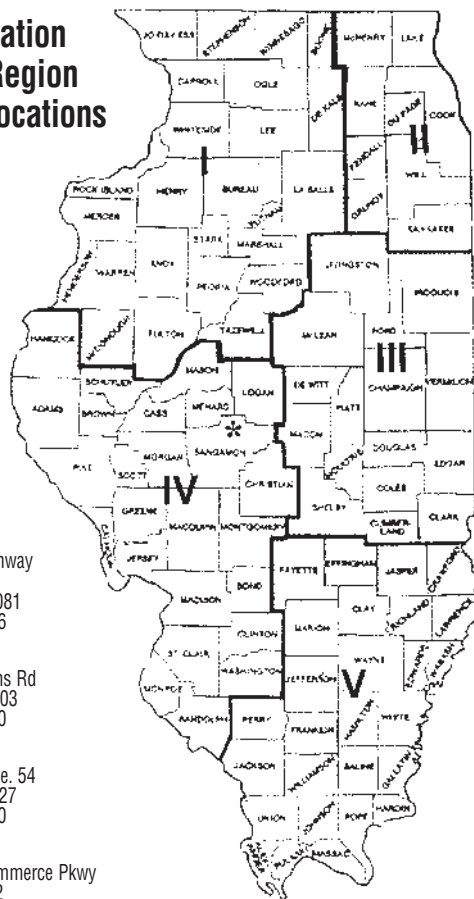
A person's privileges to operate a watercraft may be suspended for a period of 1 – 3 years for violations of operating under the influence, careless operation, reckless operation, or failure to report an accident.

Further, it shall be unlawful for any person to operate a watercraft when their privileges have been suspended or revoked in this state, or by another state, a federal agency, or a province of Canada.

TDD: 217/782-9175

Ameritech Relay Number: 1-800-526-0844

Illinois Conservation Police Region Office Locations



REGION I
2317 E. Lincolnway
Suite A
Sterling, IL 61081
(815) 625-0086

REGION II
2050 W. Stearns Rd
Bartlett, IL 60103
(847) 608-3100

REGION III
15676 State Rte. 54
Clinton, IL 61727
(217) 935-6860

REGION IV
4521 Alton Commerce Pkwy
Alton, IL 62002
(618) 462-1181

REGION V
11731 State Hwy 37
Benton, IL 62812
(618) 435-8138

SPRINGFIELD ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702-1271
(217) 782-6431

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the DNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.